

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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O R 041039 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2233

SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SANAA 979

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: US, YE, SA, MASS

SUBJ: QUERY RE USMTM VIEW QABBANI REPORT

SECDEF FOR ISA

SUMMARY: YARG HAS REPORT THAT US MILITARY ADVISORS IN SAUDI ARABIA HAVE DENIGRATED RESULTS OF GENERAL QABBANI'S SURVEY VISIT ON YEMEN'S MILITARY NEEDS AND ARE INSISTING ON A COMPLETELY NEW SURVEY. YARG FINDS THIS REPORT, IF TRUE, PROFOUNDLY DISCOURAGING PARTICULARLY IN PRESENT HOUR OF NEED. WE HAVE TOLD YARG WE HIGHLY DOUBTFUL OF ITS REPORT BUT WOULD ASK EMBASSY JIDDA'S COMMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE ASSASSINATION OF REPUBLICAN COUNCIL MEMBER MAHAMMAD ALI ' UTHMAN, YARG LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN IN VIRTUALLY NON- STOP CONFERENCE TO REVIEW NATION'S MILITARY AND INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATIONS. NEW BOMBINGS BY SOUTHERN SABOTEURS AND JUNE 2 CAPTURE OF AN IMPORTANT SOUTHERN AGENT WHO HAD BEEN OPERATING IN HITHERTO LARGELY UNCONTAMINATED EAST AND NORTH IN CONTACT WITH TERRORIST CELLS AND ON WHOSE PERSON A FRESH ASSASSINATION LIST WAS FOUND, HAVE ADDED TO THE SENSE THAT THIS IS A CRITICAL HOUR FOR YAR.

2. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE RECURRENT THEME IN YARG'S
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REVIEW OF ITS SITUATION IS HOW SOON AND WHERE CAN WE GET HELP, BOTH BECAUSE WE DESPERATELY NEED WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FOR DEFENSE AND ESPECIALLY INTERNAL SECURITY, AND TO SHOW A DOUBTING POPULACE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT CAN EFFECTIVELY DEFEND THE NATION'S INTEREST? WHILE THERE IS FAIR DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN GOOD INTENTIONS OF USG, THERE IS AN ABIDING SUSPICION THAT SAG, USG'S CHOSEN INSTRUMENT IN THE EFFORT TO HELP YEMEN, IS NOT RELIABLE AND WILL CONTINUE DRAG ITS FEET IN GETTING NEEDED HELP TO YEMEN OUT OF AN HISTORIC PREFERENCE FOR KEEPING PERIPHERAL NEIGHBORS WEAK. THIS SUSPICION EPITOMIZED IN PRIVATE STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT IRYANI TO FONMIN NU' MAN FOLLOWING ' UTHMAN ASSASSINATION TO THE EFFECT THAT QTE I WILL BELIEVE THE SAUDIS HAVE CHANGED WHEN I SEE THE EQUIPMENT ARRIVING UNQTE.

3. AGAINST THIS ATTITUDINAL BACKGROUND WHICH NOT NEW BUT WHICH HAS BEEN PUSHED INTO FOREFRONT OF GOVERNMENT DISCUSSIONS AS RESULT OF TENSION CAUSED BY RECENT EVENTS, FONMIN CALLED ME IN EARLY MORNING JUNE 4. HE SAID YARG HAS REPORT THAT US MILITARY ADVISORS IN SAUDI ARABIA HAD TOLD SAG THAT GENERAL QABBANI'S REPORT CANNOT BE REGARDED AS ADEQUATE BASIS ON WHICH TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR RE- EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING OF YEMENI ARMY. US ADVISORS REPORTEDLY INSISTING THAT NO ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN PROCEED UNTIL FURTHER SURVEY BY A RELIABLE FOREIGN GROUP. IN THIS CONNECTION, REPORT STATES UK WILLING SEND A BRITISH TEAM IF REQUESTED. FONMIN ASKED IF REPORT WERE TRUE AND IF I COULD DOUBLECHECK WITH AMB. THACHER.

4. I SAID I HAD NOTHING TO BEAR OUT THIS REPORT. AS FAR AS I KNEW US ADVISORS, WHILE NOT AGREEING WITH EVERY ASPECT OF QABBANI'S CONCLUSIONS (E. G. COASTAL ARTILLERY) FELT HIS REPORT WAS A SATISFACTORY BASIS UPON WHICH TO CONSIDER MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. I WAS AWARE THAT AT TIME OF LORD CARRINGTON'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA BRITISH HAD VOLUNTEERED AND HAD SINCE REITERATED THEIR WILLINGNESS SEND MILITARY SURVEY TEAM TO YEMEN. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT REFLECT A BRITISH DESIRE TO KEEP A HAND IN THE ARMS SALES PICTURE. IT SEEMED

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TO ME THAT IN VIEW OF THE QABBANI VISIT, EVENTS HAD OVERTAKEN THE BRITISH PROPOSAL. HOWEVER, I PROMISED I WOULD CHECK WITH AMBASSADOR THACHER TO GET A CURRENT READING OF USMTM VIEW OF QABBANI REPORT AND STATUS OF ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH SAG.

5. COMMENT: IDEA THAT US ADVISORS HAVE REJECTED QABBANI REPORT AND ARE INSISTING THAT YEMEN' S NEEDS BE SURVEYED DE NOVO IS OF COURSE VERY DISTURBING TO YARG IN CURRENT CONTEXT. IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE SOME DIS-INFORMATION ACTIVITY ON THE PART OF PERSONS ANXIOUS TO CAST DOUBT ON EFFICACY OF US AND SAUDI HELP IN PRESENT CRITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENT.
CRAWFORD

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS
*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 JUN 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANAA00979
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SANAA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730621/aaaajdkz.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22-Oct-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <30-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 980210
Subject: QUERY RE USMTM VIEW QABBANI REPORT
TAGS: MASS, SA, US, YE
To: JIDDA
SECSTATE WASHDC
SS
WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005